

Member services include continually updated library of projects, comty rels manuals, a-v materials, directory of comty rels personnel, newsletter covering case studies, strategies, plans & programs.

Consulting services by Center's faculty & professional staff are provided in a) needs assessment, b) developing & implementing programs, c) designing contributions policy, d) developing employee volunteer programs, e) improving state & local gov't rels, f) conducting program evaluation. (More info from Center at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02167)

"Businesses everywhere, no matter what they do or how big they are, rely on the same resources to fuel their growth & success. The community. Business depends on the community for a qualified, motivated labor force...fairness in regulatory matters...quality of life that attracts & keeps good people. In return, the community looks to business for a solid economic base, integrity, good will and responsibility in dealing with social issues. The needs of the community and those of business are closely intertwined. For that reason, community relations is a vital part of today's business."

ITEMS PRACTITIONERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

¶Cartoon about the shuttle disaster lambastes public relations. MacNelly's drawing shows the typical row of launch controllers in front of their video monitors. One says, "The engineers are all worried about the temperature." The next, "The company's not sure about those O-rings." The next asks, "Are we go for launch?" Last man in line answers, "I'll ask public affairs."

¶Teleconference, "AIDS in the Workplace," will bring together top public officials, attorneys, policymakers, insurance representatives, corporate & union officials and gay rights activists to discuss: 1) testing & screening workers & applicants for AIDS, 2) employees' privacy rights, 3) legal rights of persons with AIDS under EEO and handicap statutes -- how & why they are being successful in legal challenges, 4) legal rights of co-workers of AIDS victims, 5) effect of AIDS on the insurance industry. Viewers will be able to question the panel. Registration fee for the March 26 teleconference is \$160. Over 100 locations are available across the US. (For info or to register, call 312/948-9006)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

RETIRED? Ray Simon is giving the word a new definition. He's still teaching 2 courses at Utica College, about to publish a book of cases, "Public Relations Management: A Case Book." Due in April, book is "designed for senior level graduate courses and for in-house seminars in departments & pr firms." (UC is still looking for Simon's full time replacement.)

Nevertheless, Raymond Simon Institute for Public Relations was founded last April to recognize the teacher &

textbook author as he retired. It may sponsor seminars, set up an annual lecture named after an important pr person, publish papers, arrange intern positions. \$25,000 has already been raised and fundraising continues. Trustees are: Harold Burson, US Rep Sherwood Boehlert, David D'Alessandro (sr vp-corp comms, John Hancock), Ann Higbee (vp-pr, Eric Mower & Assocs), John Behrens (coord of journalism/pr degree prgm), Duncan McCully (vp-mktg, Sketchley Services) & Ray Simon.

pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations,
Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.29 No.10
March 10, 1986

VIDEO NEWS RELEASES: "CONSUMER REPORTS" IS WORRIED, HILL AND KNOWLTON CLAIMS THEY'RE EFFECTIVE, BUT TV NEWS DIRECTOR SAYS FEW ARE USED

Are video news releases effective -- and ethical? Are they used by good tv stations? According to the latest Consumer Reports, these "thinly disguised product plugs are not news and shouldn't be passed off as such." 3-pg article titled "Advertising In Disguise" comes down hard against practitioners. "Passing off corporate handouts as news is nothing new: It's gone on for as long as there have been public relations firms -- and lazy journalists. In recent years, though, the techniques used to insert product plugs in the media under the guise of news have become more sophisticated."

Hill & Knowlton's video news releases for 1) Procter & Gamble's Spic & Span and 2) Beecham Lab's Augmentin are singled out as deceptive. Article points out, however, from H&K's point of view the Augmentin video clip was "a total success." 50-100 tv stations used it in some way, H&K estimates.

WHO USES THEM? "We seldom, if ever, use them. Handout video is rarely used by any major broadcaster -- unless it can't be obtained in any other way," Paul Davis, well-known news director at WGN-TV (Chi), told prr. Criteria for using them include 1) they are unique, 2) unavailable elsewhere & 3) they have an overwhelming impact on the viewing area. "If you do use it, you must clearly label who provided it."

Davis is amazed at the energy spent producing video news releases.

The former national pres of Radio-Television News Directors Ass'n says, "We don't even look at those we receive. Use is low among most major shops. We rarely even use slides or still shots. If we're interested enough in the story, we'll do it ourselves."

"Companies and their public relations agencies certainly aren't going to stop playing the disguised-ad game. For them, the appeal of canned news is understandable. It commands far more credibility than advertising -- and does it at a much lower cost. Sun Color Service (publicity distribution agency), for instance, says that it can reach as many people by spending \$1 on canned news as it can by spending \$23 on advertising. Given that motivation, public relations people will keep trying to get the media to serve as shells.

"It's up to the news media to avoid parroting plugs. When some news reports are really ads in disguise, it casts doubt on everything presented as news," Consumer Reports concludes.

In prr's lead story last week, PG&E's Marilyn Beret stressed, "Don't let it look like a commercial" because that gives video news releases a bad name.



Loss of control is a large factor in media's reluctance to use prepared video. His advice to preparers is to do specialized videos that news media can't create or obtain on their own. Otherwise, he advises, "Quit. Save your money."

Another new technology causing problems is satellite delivery, says Davis. "A broadcast rule & company policy is that we have to identify who pays for it. Most companies have the same policy. Often we don't know who pays, so we don't use them. The technology is racing ahead of house rules."

COMPANY GIVING IS A 2-WAY STREET:
DONOR MUST BENEFIT AS MUCH AS DONEE

Many complaints have been lodged against philanthropic gifts that gain little for the giver. Independent Sector's study, "Profiles of Effective Corporate Giving Programs" by E.B. Knauft, looks at 48 companies giving between \$98,000 & \$53 million and finds 3 components of excellence: a) support of the chief executive; b) reflecting the needs, culture & resources of the company; c) creatively responding to public needs. Another discovery: problems of arbitrary senior management intervention are minimized when management of contributions is treated like any other business function.

"The most sophisticated approaches to corporate giving involve setting a target for contributions as a percentage of pre-tax profits. The 17% of all companies that contribute 2% or more of their pre-tax net income account for 2/3rds of all corporate giving," Knauft found.

What Is An
Effective Program?

"Proactive" rather than "reactive"

"Today there is no longer a need for further justification of corporate public involvement, but much is yet to be learned about the factors associated with effective performance in this field," the study postulates.

process is what guarantees effectiveness. Study suggests 3 components:

1. Program management: a) budget constructed at beginning of year; b) a long range goal decided & announced; c) written objectives & rationale fully developed, re-assessed at least once every 3 yrs; d) decisionmaking and review process defined; e) program is accessible thru published statement of guidelines, priorities & application procedures.

2. Character of program: a) has a rationale that defines its basic purpose; b) process involves company personnel & encourages their ownership; c) grants are related to company interests or expertise; d) response to the needs of communities where company is located; e) large grants are sustained over several years, as contrasted with scattering funds in small grants to many organizations.

3. Size of program: a) companies should have long- & short-range budget objectives, even tho often difficult to project; b) using a foundation is one way to attain a modicum of consistency in giving levels despite erratic profits; c) include all categories in the goal -- cash, gifts, employee services. (14-pg summary, \$2 prepaid, from Independent Sector, 1828 L St, NW, Wash DC 20036; 202/223-8100)

ANOTHER SCHOOL PRACTITIONER MAKES CORPORATE VP:
DONALD FERGUSON TELLS HOW

"If you think of public relations as more than things & stuff, if you look at it

broadly, you can build an impressive set of credentials to move from school public relations to corporate or anywhere," Donald Ferguson told prr. A major portion of his background is in schools. But, he says, transition to corporate was "easy & quick." He is now vp-corp rels, Manville (Denver).

"In school pr you're a one-person band. You do everything. You counsel the chairman of your board (superintendent), the board of directors (school board), all the plant & facility managers (principals) and all the front line employees (teachers, custodians, cooks, bus drivers, et al). In that process you're using the best pr techniques possible to help the organization achieve its bottom line objectives. The skills are certainly transferable." Another advantage is you become very budget conscious, Ferguson points out. "It's a luxury when you've got a problem whose solution doesn't have to be nickled & dimed."

He has developed training programs & manuals for National School Public Relations Ass'n. Is presently working on "Issues Management In Education" -- a workbook on developing issues mgmt systems for schools that NSPRA will publish. It's "on the slow burner right now" tho because of commitments. He has been editor of NSPRA's "Scanner" for 1 1/2 yrs but plans to relinquish that role in the fall.

CONSULTANTS ARE EFFECTIVE ONLY 25% OF THE TIME
SHOWS SURVEY BY AMERICAN CONSULTANTS LEAGUE

Rate of effectiveness is not due to lack of expertise on the part of the consultant.

Clients are responsible for not getting their money's worth. Because consultants are generally retained to change the client's operations, advice given is often resisted. (See t&t 3/19/84 & 4/2/84, Understanding & Dealing With Resistance From Clients.)

Survey shows 50% of consultants' advice & recommendations are taken. Of that, only 50% is acted on. So only 25% of the expertise for which the client paid is actually used. "Fortunately the consultant is paid for advice given, not advice taken. Otherwise, the profession would be in a bad way. As it is, the profession is burgeoning and far exceeds the growth of any other," reports Audrey Wyatt, ACL's exec dir. Founded in '84, ACL is the only interdisciplinary consulting ass'n in the US. (2030 Clarendon Blvd, Ste.206, Arlington, Va. 22201; 703/528-4493)

THE CENTER FOR CORPORATE COMMUNITY RELATIONS
OFFERS INTENSIVE SEMINARS, MBR SERVICES, CONSULTATION

Mission is to help organizations "maintain a positive presence in communi-

ties while improving the quality of community life." Supported by Boston College & fees from corporations. In the 30s, Boston College was active in comty affairs thru its Graduate School of Social Work and School of Management. It is "recognized as helping to bring about Boston's urban renaissance in the early 50s. The Center continues that tradition," explains Center's brochure.

Offers intensive Institutes (April 6-9 & June 8-11) limited to 18 people because of interactive nature -- case study method & round table discussions. They provide a means for professionals to plan & design programs and improve strategic management skills.